









*John Galt*  
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# JOHN WICLIF:

HIS DOCTRINE AND WORK.

AN

## ADDRESS

AT THE

LINCOLN DIOCESAN CONFERENCE,

*On Thursday, October 16th, 1884.*

BY

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LINCOLN: WILLIAMSON, 290, HIGH STREET.  
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The BISHOP of LINCOLN having been prevented by illness from being present at the Diocesan Conference, this Address, which had been announced to be given by him, was delivered for him by the General Secretary of the previous Conference, the Rev. J. CLEMENTS, Sub-Dean of Lincoln.

## JOHN WICLIF.

**A**T a session of the Convocation of this Province, on May 16th last, the Archbishop of Canterbury announced that he had received a communication from the Archbishop of York, informing him that the Bishops of the Northern Province had resolved unanimously to take part in the “*Wiclif Quincentenary*,” and he further expressed a hope that the Suffragans of his Province would, in their several Dioceses, associate themselves with their Northern Brethren in that commemoration.

In compliance with that desire I now invite your attention to this subject. It has a special interest for ourselves in this Diocese. John Wiclif's life as a great Academic Teacher and Schoolman was spent at Oxford, which was then in the Diocese of Lincoln, and all his pastoral cures, namely, Fillingham in the County of Lincoln, to which he was presented on May 16th, 1361, by Balliol College, of which he was Master;<sup>1</sup> and Lutgurshall, in Bucks, which he exchanged for Fillingham, on 12th November, 1368, and Lutterworth, in Leicestershire, to which he was presented by King Edward III. on April 7th, 1374, and at which he died on December 31st, 1384, were in the Diocese of Lincoln in the fourteenth century.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See the Register of John Bokingham, Bishop of Lincoln, p. 130. His name is written there, “Magister Johannes de Wycliffe.”

<sup>2</sup> On the life and writings of Wiclif let me refer to the following works : Wilkins, *Concilia*, vol. iii. *passim* ; *Fasciculi Zizaniorum Magistri Johannis Wyclif*, edited by the late Professor Shirley, Lond., 1858 ; W. Woodford's

But the consideration of this matter has more important demands on us in other respects. It may serve to dispel the illusions of some who are enamoured of the Church of Rome, and are tempted to fall away to her; it will shew the urgent need of a religious Reformation in England at that time, and will inspire us with thankfulness to God for His goodness to the Church of England in her Reformation, not merely on account of what the Reformation did, but also for what it *did not do*; that is, not only because it removed manifold abuses, errors, and corruptions, but also because it preserved what was Scriptural, Primitive, and Catholic in the doctrine, government, and ritual of the Church.

In order that we may deal impartially with this subject, let me ask you to forget for a while that you are living in the nineteenth century, and to transport

*Report on Wiclif's writings to Archbishop Arundel*, A.D. 1396; and *Articuli Johannis Wyclifi Angli in Concilio Constantiensi damnati*, A.D. 1414; in the valuable Repertory, Brown's *Fasiculus rerum expctendarum et fugiendarum*, Lond., 1690, pp. 191—295; Henry Wharton's *Life of Wiclif in Appendix to Cave Hist. Liter.*, p. 61, ed. Basil, 1744; L'Enfant, *Histoire du Concile de Constance*, Amst., 1727, tom. i., p. 230, 401; Fuller's *Church History*, Book iv., cent. xv.; *Life of Wiclif* by Rev. John Lewis, Minister of Margate, with a valuable appendix of documents, revised edition, Oxford, 1820; *Lives of British Reformers, with copious extracts from Wiclif's Works*, Religious Tract Society, 1831; Gieseler's *Church History*, Division iv., chap. viii., § 125; *Church History*, cent. xiv., ep. 3; R. Vaughan's *Life of Wiclif*, ed. 2 vols., Lond., 1831; Dr. Lechler's *Life of Wiclif*; Canon Perry's *Students' Church History*, Lond., 1881, chap. xx.; *Wiclif's place in history*, by Professor Montagu Burrows, 1881; Canon Pennington's *John Wiclif*, S.P.C.K., 1884. I have also consulted the Registers of Bishop John Bokingham, who was Bishop of Lincoln (from 25th June, 1363) during the greater part of Wiclif's ministry in it, and for fourteen years after his death.



yourselves to the fourteenth. One of our religious Societies has recently promised to publish a printed New Testament for a penny: but in Wiclif's age there was not a single printed book in the world. The first printed volume, with its pages numbered, which appeared in England was *Æsop's Fables*, issued from Caxton's Press exactly a hundred years after Wiclif's death. The manuscript copies of the Bible translated by Wiclif and his co-adjutor, Nicholas Hereford, a little before Wiclif's death, and revised by John Purvey after his death,<sup>3</sup> cost about £40 apiece at our present rate of money value.

Let us also bear in mind that John Wiclif and his followers did not translate the Old Testament from the Hebrew original, nor the New from the original Greek, but from the Latin Vulgate. No Englishman knew Hebrew at that time, and Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln in the preceding century (A.D. 1235—1254), was regarded as a prodigy because he understood Greek.

Besides, it was not till after the year 1453, when Constantinople was taken by the Turks, that Greek Literature found its way into the West, and not till then did Englishmen become acquainted with the works of the great Theologians and Historians of the Eastern Church in their original tongue.

<sup>3</sup> For an account of these Versions see the Preface to the Holy Bible in English, made from the Latin Vulgate by John Wiclif and his followers about A.D. 1380, and revised by John Purvey about 1388, edited by the Rev. John Forshall and Sir F. Madden, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 4 vols., 4to. The New Testament has been edited separately, with an Introduction and Glossary, by W. W. Skeat, M.A., Oxford, 1879.

Nor was this all ; a large number of apocryphal and spurious writings were then floating about in this country, which were regarded by theologians with as much reverence as Holy Scripture itself. If you will examine the elaborate work of Wiclif's learned and candid opponent, William Woodford, the Minorite Friar, commissioned by Archbishop Arundel in 1396 to report to him after Wiclif's death on his greatest work,<sup>4</sup> the *Triologus*, you will see that this celebrated controversialist appeals not only to such supposititious works as Dionysius the Areopagite on the celestial hierarchy, but also to the Decretals, now known to be spurious, of the earliest Popes from St. Peter downwards ; and also to the apocryphal Acts of St. Peter, St. Matthew, and St. Mark, which were generally believed<sup>5</sup> to be genuine, and which appeared to sanction almost all that then existed in the papal system, such as the Supremacy of the Roman Pontiff, the dignity of Cardinals, the sanctity and antiquity of the Monastic Orders ; the doctrine of Transubstantiation, Indulgences, Purgatory, Auricular Confession, Pilgrimages,—in fact all that was received and revived by the Church of Rome at that time.

Considering therefore the scarcity of copies of the Scriptures, and that spurious writings sanctioning the doctrines and practices of the Papacy were revered

<sup>4</sup> It is contained in Brown's *Fasiculus rerum expetendarum et fugiendarum*, London, 1690, vol. i., where it occupies 74 pages from p. 191.

<sup>5</sup> Wiclif himself quotes the *Apocryphal Life of St. Clement* as a genuine work, *Triolog.*, iv., 28, 29.

generally as of no less authority than the Word of God, we ought to make charitable allowances for those papal divines who defended those doctrines and practices, which were associated in their minds, by the tradition of many centuries, with what was most venerable in faith and worship, and who therefore denounced with vehement indignation all those who, like John Wiclif, rose up to impugn and subvert them.

John Wiclif stood almost alone among the Teachers of his age as the champion of the supremacy and sufficiency of Holy Scripture. He was a great Schoolman as well as divine. Many Schoolmen gloried in other titles.<sup>6</sup> One of them was called "doctor angelicus," another "doctor seraphicus," a third "doctor subtilis," a fourth "doctor resolutissimus," a fifth, —William Occam, the leader of the Nominalists, — "doctor invincibilis." But John Wiclif was content to be called "*Doctor Evangelicus*." He was like the Merchantman in the Gospel seeking goodly pearls (Matt. xiii. 45); he had found the pearl of great price,—the Bible,—and he sold all for that. Papal Decretals, acts of so-called Apostles and Evangelists, the realistic dogmas of Platonic Metaphysics, and what he had no less dearly cherished, the solid tenets of Aristotelian Ethics,—all these he was ready to barter for the Bible. "Let God be true, and every man a liar" (Rom. iii. 4), if he dares to speak anything against God, was his maxim.

<sup>6</sup> Tennemann's *Philosophie*, Leipzig, 1829, § 262—§ 271.

In a noble passage of his *Trialogus*,<sup>7</sup>—one of his latest, and the greatest of his works,—following in the steps of St. Augustine, of whom happily he was a careful student and an intense admirer, and to whom he there refers, he lays it down as a fundamental principle<sup>8</sup> that, in dealing with *Holy Scripture*, we must begin with faith in the *Godhead of Christ*. He almost identifies the written Word with the Incarnate Word. We must learn to look up to CHRIST, Very God and Very Man, putting into our hands the Old Testament, on which in the days of His earthly ministry He set His divine seal by acknowledging the Inspiration, and Divine Authority of the entire Volume of the Hebrew Scriptures ; and we must also contemplate the Eternal Son of God delivering to us from heaven the New Testament, which He wrote by the hands of His Apostles and Evangelists, whom He taught all things, whom He guided into all truth, and to whose remembrance He brought all things which He had said to them on earth, by means of the Holy Ghost the Comforter whom He sent down to them from heaven (John xiv. 26 ; xv. 26).

John Wiclif affirmed his belief in the plenary inspiration of Holy Scripture, and he boldly declared his conviction that it was antichristian to doubt the truth of any part of it.<sup>8</sup> He therefore did not need

<sup>7</sup> *Trialogus*, iii., 31.

<sup>8</sup> Cp. the wise and eloquent words of St. Augustine, de Civitate Dei. xi., c. 2, "Ipsa Veritas, Deus, Dei Filius, &c., and c. 3, Hic prius prophetas deinde per Se Ipsum, &c."

<sup>8</sup> *Trial.*, iii., 31.

the help of human criticism to convince him that the documents, to which some of his opponents referred, were spurious and untrustworthy. He saw that they were unscriptural and anti-scriptural; that was enough for him, he therefore rejected them; and in his vigorous and homely style he said that Priests who spent their time in reading the Papal Decretals were no better than fools.<sup>9</sup>

By God's good providence Wiclif's life was preserved amid many dangers for the accomplishment of his great work,—the greatest work that was done in that century,—the translation of the Holy Bible into the English tongue. The version of the New Testament was executed by himself, that of the Old partly by another, Nicolas Hereford, and partly by himself at a time when he was suffering from sickness.

Pope Gregory XIth ordered the Archbishop of Canterbury and the English Bishops to apprehend and imprison him. His opinions were denounced by Archbishops Sudbury<sup>1</sup> and Courtenay,<sup>2</sup> and by a Provincial Council at London (May 13, 1382) and he was also condemned by the University of Oxford,<sup>3</sup> and his life was imperilled by illness. John Bokingham, Bishop of Lincoln, in whose Diocese Wiclif spent his ministerial life, was one of the ten Bishops<sup>4</sup> at the

<sup>9</sup> Brown, *Fasicul.*, p. 292.

<sup>1</sup> Wilkins, *Concilia*, iii., 123, 5 Kal., January, 1377.

<sup>2</sup> Wilkins, *Concil.*, iii., 157, May 17 and May 21.

<sup>3</sup> Wilkins, iii., 170–172.

<sup>4</sup> See *Fasiculi Zizaniorum*, pp. 286–498. The celebrated William of Wickham, Bishop of Winchester, founder of Winchester College and New College, was also one of the Bishops at the Council. Bokingham's name does not appear in the list of the Council in Wilkins *Concil.*, iii., 158.

Council of the Earthquake (so called from the shock which disturbed its proceedings) at Greyfriars, London, May, 1382, where Wiclif himself was not present, but where many of his doctrines were condemned.

The Bishop of Lincoln also cited William de Swynderby, "the Wicliffite," to the Chapter House of our Cathedral in the July following, and forced him to recant his opinions.<sup>5</sup> And in Archbishop Courtenay's Register<sup>6</sup> there is a letter to Bishop Bokingham, in which he is praised for his zeal and courage in proceeding against "that Anti-Christ" (John Wiclif) "Subverter of the faith." I cannot, however, find any evidence in Bokingham's Register that he ever summoned Wiclif before him; probably the Bishop, finding himself no match for Wiclif in learning, energy, and ability, and conscious of the corruptions and abuses of the Papal system, of which his Episcopal Register exhibits melancholy evidence, allowed him to remain unmolested in his Parish of Fillingham, then at Lutgurshall, and lastly at Lutterworth, where he died in peace five hundred years ago.

John Wiclif's career was marked by providential interpositions. There was then a growing jealousy between the Civil and Ecclesiastical Powers. Wiclif almost alone among the Clergy, defended the temporal authority against the spirituality, which was alarmed by the prospect of a heavy taxation of Ecclesiastical

<sup>5</sup> *Fasic. Zizan.*, 334. There is a fuller account in Bishop Bokingham's Register of the proceedings against Swynderby at Lincoln, *Memoranda*, pp. cexl.—cexlii.

<sup>6</sup> Wilkins *Concilia*, iii., p. 168.

revenues for the public service. He was therefore patronized by Edward III., and by his son, John of Gaunt, the Regent of the Kingdom, and for a time by the nephew of John of Gaunt, King Richard II. The schism also in the Papacy (A.D. 1378) and the feuds of the two anti-popes Urban VI. and Clement VII., weakened the Papacy, and rendered it less able to persecute : and Wiclif closed his career when summoned to Rome, by a calm letter to Pope Urban VI., exhorting him to become poor like Christ, and to give up his secular sway to the temporal power. It was not from want of will on the part of the Papacy that Wiclif died in peace. This was clear from what happened after his death. Even in his life-time one of his co-adjutors in translating the Bible, Nicholas Hereford, had been forced to recant, and another, John Purvey, abjured his opinions<sup>7</sup> after Wiclif's death. What Rome would have done to Wiclif while living if she could, was shewn by what she did when he was dead. In 1412 Archbishop Arundel<sup>8</sup> and his Suffragans wrote to Pope John XXIII., and reported to him how "John Wiclif, a most wretched and pestilent person of damnable memory, a son of the old serpent, and a precursor and child of Anti-Christ, had endeavoured to subvert the most holy faith and doctrine of the Church with all his might ; and as a crowning act of malignity had produced a new Translation of the Scriptures in the Mother tongue." The Archbishop

<sup>7</sup> Feb. 29, 1400. *Fasiculi*, pp. 400, 410, 440.

<sup>8</sup> Wilkins, *Concilia*, iii., 350.

sent to the Pope an elaborate examination and condemnation of Wiclif's heresies, extracted from his writings by the University of Oxford,<sup>9</sup> and supplicated the Pope to order the bones of the heresiarch to be dug up, and to be cast on a dunghill, or to be burnt. On the 4th of May in the year 1415, the Council of Constance<sup>1</sup> reinforced this request; and finally Pope Martin in 1427 sent a command to Richard Fleming,<sup>2</sup> Bishop of Lincoln (the founder of Lincoln College, Oxford,) to put this decree into execution;<sup>3</sup> accordingly his bones were exhumed from their grave in the chancel of Lutterworth Church, and were burnt to ashes, which were cast into the Swift, the brook near the church.

We have been considering the circumstances which swayed the minds of Wiclif's opponents. Let us now endeavour to place ourselves in Wiclif's

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 339—349.

<sup>1</sup> Labbe, *Concilia*, xii., 49.

<sup>2</sup> It has been said by some (*e.g.*, Professor Rogers in his Gascoigne's *Loci*, pp. viii.—lxxxv.) that Bishop Fleming was a renegade, having first favoured Wicliffe's opinions. This is a mistake; see Wilkins *Concilia*, iii., 172.

<sup>3</sup> Raynald *Annal.*, 1427, No. 14. The University of Oxford gave a high testimony to Wiclif on Oct. 5th, 1406, Wilkins, iii., 302, but entirely changed its tone in 1412; *Ibid.*, iii., 339—349. This latter document is very important, because it quotes extracts verbatim from various treatises of Wiclif which it specifies. In Capgrave's *Chronicle*, A.D. 1384, Wicliffe is characterized as "the Organ of the Devil, the Enemy of the Church, the idol of heresy, the mirror of hypocrisy, nourisher of schism." Similar language is used by Walsingham, quoted by Lewis, 124, where is a description of his death. See also *Ibid.*, p. 336, No. 25, where is an account of it by his Curate; he had been palsied for two years before his death. In Gascoigne's *Loci*, p. 141, he is called "nequam rita, *i.e.*, vitâ, 'wicked in life' (a pun on his name Wiclyffe) memorie ter damnatae."



position. He candidly confessed that he was of a hot and impetuous temper,<sup>4</sup> and the eminence he had attained among the schoolmen<sup>5</sup> of his age at Oxford made him self-confident and impatient of contradiction. One of the least amiable characteristics of the scholastic disputations of the time was that the combatants contended for victory rather than for truth. The subtle entanglements of their dialectics were a snare to them ; and were not favourable to the healthful exercise of conscience and of reason. Without subscribing to all that the Church Historian, Joseph Milner,<sup>6</sup> (an ardent partizan of Wiclif in many of his doctrines,) has said on what he calls the sophistical equivocations and evasions<sup>7</sup> in some of Wiclif's vindications of himself when pressed by his opponents, we cannot deny that even in abstruse questions of theology he wrote sometimes as a schoolman rather than as a divine.<sup>8</sup> But his last resort at the close of his career was to Holy Scripture.<sup>9</sup>

Taking his position with the Bible in his hands he was not unlike St. Paul at Athens when his spirit

<sup>4</sup> See the passage in *Fascic. Ziz.*, p. xlvi.

<sup>5</sup> See this well stated by Professor Shirley, *Fasc. Ziz.*, p. xlvi.-li.

<sup>6</sup> Milner's *Church History*, Cent. xiv., chap. iii., p. 595-601, ed. Edin., 1842.

<sup>7</sup> Some specimens of Wiclif's evasions may be seen in Lewis, p. 60-62, 65, 74, 75, 76, 118, 121.

<sup>8</sup> For example, in the first book of his *Trialogus*, where he argues concerning the attributes of God, and even for the doctrine of the Trinity (chap. 6 and 7), from principles derived from Platonic Realism.

<sup>9</sup> We may notice an interesting intellectual and religious progress in his *Trialogus*, completed after 1382 ; the first three books are Scholastic, the last is purely Scriptural.

was stirred within him by what he saw around him (Acts xvii. 16). The abuses and corruptions of the Papal system in England were then at their height. The subject is too vast for us here. Let us confine ourselves to Wiclif and to this Diocese.

Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln in the thirteenth century, who is often quoted with honour by Wiclif as “Lincolniensis,” had done battle against the Papacy; for example, against the attempt of Pope Innocent the Fourth, in 1253, to force his nephew,<sup>1</sup> an Italian boy, into a Prebendal Stall of Lincoln Cathedral. Wiclif had defended the rights of the Throne of England against the claim of Pope Urban VI. for 33 years of arrears to the Papacy by reason of King John’s surrender of his crown to the Roman Pontiff, which, as Wiclif showed, King John was bound to defend, but had no power to give away. Wiclif exposed in his two years’ embassy at Bruges (1374, 5) the usurpations and exactions of the Papacy in disposing of Bishoprics and Benefices in England, sometimes to foreigners who knew nothing of the English language, even before they were vacant, by Papal “provisions,” as they were called,<sup>2</sup> and in levying firstfruits and tenths upon them. In one year, 1360, six English Bishoprics were disposed of to aliens. He had seen a Bishop of Lincoln, Bishop

<sup>1</sup> See Dr. Luard’s edition of Grosseteste’s Epistles, p. 432-442.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. Gascoigne’s *Loci e Libro Veritatum*, edited by Professor Thorold Rogers, Oxford, 1881, pp. 12, 26, 28, 52, 112, a work which reflects much light on the abuses against which John Wiclif had to contend, and which he tried to remove.

Bokingham, and other Bishops, simoniacally introduced into their Sees, and if he had lived a few years longer he would have seen the same Bishop of Lincoln, after a thirty-five years' Episcopate, dispossessed by the cruel and arbitrary tyranny of the Pope (on pretence of a translation to Lichfield which he declined), to make room for the youthful illegitimate son of John of Gaunt, Henry Beaufort, afterwards Cardinal. He would have seen two Visitations of Lincoln Cathedral by that Bishop,<sup>3</sup> in which the lawless violence and profligate licentiousness of some of its members were exposed. And he had heard the Roman Pontiff, who practised and encouraged such enormities as these, called "a God upon earth," and "equal to the Son of God ;"<sup>4</sup> and he had seen the luxury of the Monastic Orders grasping the tithes of Parishes by Appropriations.<sup>5</sup> In Bishop Bokingham's Register more than 40 such Appropriations of tithes of Parishes in this Diocese are recorded. He had seen the abuses of the Simoniacal Exchange of Benefices. The same Register is full of them ; these combined the evils of our modern Donatives and Bonds of Resignation, and against them Archbishop Courtenay

<sup>3</sup> A.D. 1393, 1394. They are described in Bokingham's *Memoranda*, pp. 470-475. The records of them are very interesting, and ought to be printed. In p. 476 Bishop Bokingham complains of the irreligious and immoral condition of parts of his Diocese.

<sup>4</sup> See Wiclif's words in his work on the Church, edited by Dr. Todd, p. x., and notes, pp. clxiv., cevi.

<sup>5</sup> On the Evils of Appropriations, see Gascoigne's *Loci.*, ed. Thorold Rogers, Oxford, 1881, p. 3, p. 70, p. 148.

protested in vain.<sup>6</sup> The Parish of Riseholme (then written Rysum, or Rysom) seems to have suffered a good deal in this way.<sup>7</sup> He saw and deplored the ignorance of the Clergy, many of whom were put into parishes for a slender pittance by the Monastic Houses which devoured the tithes, and who did not know "the Ten Commandments," and could not read a verse of the Psalter.<sup>8</sup> He saw the four Orders of Mendicant Friars, 4,000 in number, like swarms of locusts, allowed to rove freely over the parishes, and, as Wiclif's contemporary, the Poet Chaucer, describes them,<sup>9</sup> supplanting the secular Clergy by "hearing sweetly confessions," and, "pleasant was their absolution," and by shriving men and women easily, and by coaxing them to "give money to the pooré friars," instead of "weeping and prayers," for (as Chaucer says)—

"Unto a pooré Order well to give  
Is signé that a man is well yshrive."

He had heard those covetous and hypocritical vagabonds, who issued forth from what he calls "*Caym's Castles*,"<sup>1</sup> claiming to themselves the

<sup>6</sup> See his indignant letter on *Choppechurches* in Wilkins *Concilia*, iii., 215.

<sup>7</sup> See Bishop Bokingham's *Register*, p. 134 and 139, and at A.D. 1395, where Rysum was exchanged with Fylingham (Fillingham).

<sup>8</sup> Wiclif's *Great Sentence of Curse Expounded*, MS., c. 3-16, p. 40.

<sup>9</sup> See Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales Prologue*, "A Friar there was," v. 280. These roving mendicant friars invading the parochial cures, seem to have given an impulse and a pretext for Wiclif's itinerant "Poor Priests."

<sup>1</sup> *Trial.*, iv., 33. So called from *Caym*, the then received form of *Cain* (the first murderer), and combining the initials of the four Orders, Carmelites, Augustinians, Jacobites, or Dominicans (from Rue St. Jaques at Paris), and Minorites, or Franciscans. See Dr. Todd's note, p. clxxiii., on Wiclif's *Tractate on the Church*.

monopoly of the name and essence of "*religion*," and affirming that to die in their habit was a passport to heaven.

These and other like things John Wiclif had seen and heard. Was it wonderful that a person of his fervid temperament, one whose heart glowed with zeal for God, and whose mind was filled with the Word of God as with an inward fire, striving to burst forth from his mouth, should have been roused by a spirit of indignation, and should have been transported beyond the bounds of calm reason into extravagant notions and intemperate effusions? He would have been something more than a man; he would have been like the Archangel Michael, disputing with the Devil about the body of Moses (Jude 9), and maintaining his angelic dignity and calmness in the conflict with Satan, if it had been otherwise.

Not therefore in any captious or censorious spirit, nor with any language of disparagement (heaven forbid), let us now pass on to consider the errors into which this great man was betrayed by a common infirmity of human nature, even from his zeal for the truth, and by an excess of reaction against its opposites, and by an unbounded exaggeration of the truth itself, and by an overweening reliance on himself. So certain is it, as the ancient poet says, that,

In vitium ducit culpæ fuga, si caret arte ;  
and,  
Virtus est medium vitiorum ; et utrinque remotum.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Horat. A.P. 31 ; 1 Epist. xviii. 9 ; 1 Sat. ii. 14.

History abounds with examples of religionists who have imagined that evils in the Church can only be cured by their opposites.<sup>4</sup>

In reviewing Wiclif's doctrines we do not arrogate any superiority to ourselves, but we must express our thankfulness to God, Who has taught us by the experience of five centuries, and by the writings of wise and learned men, especially of one to whom, under God, the Church and Realm of England have been indebted more than to any other for the solution of these questions, and for a firm settlement in the truth,—a person, who, like John Wiclif was first an honoured Teacher in the University of Oxford, and afterwards like him a plain Parish Priest in this Diocese, where he was instituted to his first Benefice, Drayton-Beauchamp, in 1584, just 200 years after Wiclif's death,—need I mention to you the name of Richard Hooker? In his great work on the *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* Richard Hooker does not often mention John Wiclif by name, but the Ecclesiastical Polity may be regarded as corrective of John Wiclif's teaching in almost every particular where that teaching swerved from the truth. The careful student of Hooker's work will have observed that in many portions of it he is referring to the peculiar tenets broached by Wiclif and his followers, and developed afterwards by powerful partizans in England, and producing their fruits in some of the most memorable

<sup>4</sup> This principle of the Puritan Theology has been exposed by Hooker, E.P. iv., viii.

events of our history, both in Church and State. It is on this account that the present subject is of so much importance to ourselves, whether we be Clergymen or Laymen; and I am therefore venturing to dwell upon it at greater length than I should otherwise have presumed to do.

In analysing Wiclif's tenets, we are encountered by some persons with an objection that we are not competent to deal with those opinions, because so many of his works,—sufficient it is calculated to fill twenty octavo volumes,—still remain in manuscript. But I must demur to this allegation. We possess one of Wiclif's greatest and latest works, his *Triologus*<sup>5</sup> in four books, in Latin, (and his Latin works are much more scientific than his English,) which has been printed three times,<sup>6</sup> and which was written after May, 1382,<sup>7</sup> that is only two years and a half before his death.

This work, the *Triologus*, is a systematic exposition of theological doctrine and discipline; and may be regarded as his deliberate and final utterance on those subjects.

We have also another important work of Wiclif in English, entitled, *On the Church and her Members*,

<sup>5</sup> Called by Professor Shirley (*Fasc. Ziz.* xlvi.) "his greatest work, and one of the most thoughtful of the middle ages." Professor Gieseler who gives a syllabus of it, iv., 250, calls it "his theological bequest to the Church," and L'Enfant, *Concile de Constance*, i., 222, describes it as "le plus important de tous ses ouvrages."

<sup>6</sup> In 1525; and at Francf., 1753; Oxford, 1869.

<sup>7</sup> See *Trial.*, iv., 27; and iv., 36, 37, where he refers to the Provincial Council of the Earthquake in May of that year.

published for the first time at Dublin, in 1851, by the late learned Dr. J. H. Todd with notes, and written by Wiclif a short time only before his death.<sup>8</sup>

Referring to these works as authoritative final statements of Wiclif's opinions, we may now proceed to specify some of the points in which he gave occasion to dangerous consequences by exaggeration of truth, or by excessive re-action against errors which he endeavoured to correct by their opposite extremes.

First then as to *Holy Scripture*.

John Wiclif was filled with righteous indignation against the Church of Rome for with-holding the Scriptures,—which are the Bread of Life,—from the people, and feeding them with the husks of fabulous legends, and leading them astray with unscriptural, and anti-scriptural doctrines and practices, and he boldly affirmed, as we have seen, the supremacy and sufficiency of Holy Scripture. So far as Articles of *Faith* and supernatural *doctrines* are concerned he did well. But, as the experience of after generations has shewn, he greatly erred in extending this principle to *rites and ceremonies*<sup>9</sup> of the Church other than the Holy Sacraments, which are of divine institution and of universal and perpetual obligation.

To look for a specification in Holy Scripture of all rites and ceremonies, and to say that no rites or

<sup>8</sup> It mentions in p. xxxiii. the disastrous military Crusade under the Bishop of Norwich into Flanders, in support of Pope Urban VI. ; which expedition was in A.D. 1383, the year before Wiclif's death. See Dr. Todd's note p. clxxvi.

<sup>9</sup> See his words in Wilkins, *Concilia*, iii., 347, No. 191, 192.



ceremonies are to be used but such as are set down in Scripture, was, as Richard Hooker<sup>1</sup> has proved by irresistible arguments, to mistake altogether the purpose of Scripture, and to ignore the functions of the Church, which (as our 20th Article says) “has authority to decree Rites and Ceremonies”; and, as we read in our 34th Article, “Every particular Church hath authority to ordain, change or abolish, ceremonies or rites of the Church ordained only by man’s authority, so that all things be done to edifying.”

It was from this unhappy misconception of the supremacy and sufficiency of Scripture in such matters as these that the troubles and contentions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries arose and were fomented in the Church, which led to her disruption, and with it to the fall of the Monarchy itself. This erroneous notion led to the riots at Cambridge, when, in Whitgift’s mastership, the Undergraduates of Trinity College and St. John’s College threw off their surplices in the chapels.<sup>2</sup>

It was on this fallacious pretext that many of the Clergy in Exeter Diocese refused to kneel at the Holy Communion.<sup>3</sup> It was on this plea that many persons scrupled at the use of the Ring at Marriage and at the sign of the Cross at Baptism.<sup>4</sup> Organs and stained glass in churches were offensive to them. These things,

<sup>1</sup> Who calls this the first Puritan principle. Book ii., chap. i.—v., and cp. viii. ; Book iii., ch. v.

<sup>2</sup> Strype’s *Annals*, i., Pt. ii., chap. xlv.

<sup>3</sup> Bishop Sanderson’s *Lectures on Conscience*, Lect. iii., 16.

<sup>4</sup> Hooker, iii., chap. v.

they said, were not sanctioned by Scripture, and therefore were to be abolished. The plea of the supremacy and sufficiency of Scripture was made an occasion for subverting the authority of the Church ; and even led, eventually, to denial of the truth of Scripture itself. For (as our 20th Article well says) the Church is “a witness and a keeper” of holy Writ ; and without the Church it will not be easy to prove the inspiration of Scripture itself, or to secure its right interpretation.<sup>5</sup> They who separate the Bible from the Church, are in danger of losing both.

Another mistaken and dangerous principle to which Wiclif’s teaching gave currency, was concerning the *Church* itself.

According to him *the Church consists only of holy persons* predestined by God to salvation. In his Treatise on the Church<sup>6</sup> he says that “Christ vouchsafeth to call the Church His spouse ; but cursed men he calleth fiends ; therefore if such men were members of the Church, we should be forced to say that “Christ had wedded the Fiend,” and “Every member, he sayth, of holy Church shall be saved with Christ.”<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Hooker, i., chap. xiv. ; and on the dangerous consequences of the misapplication of the principle as to the “perfection of Scripture,” see Bp. Sanderson’s *Lectures on Conscience*, Lect. iv., 1, 16, 19.

<sup>6</sup> Edited by Dr. Todd, p. iv. and p. v. As this is his latest work other passages of a milder character, such as are quoted by Lewis, p. 152, cannot be regarded as a set-off against it.

<sup>7</sup> Cp. Lewis, p. 27, 28. Some of his last words on this subject are in *Trial*, iv., 22. “We ought to deem that those who live holy lives with us are sons of Holy Mother Church, and those who live otherwise are children of Satan and the synagogue of Satan.”

On these assertions Dr. Todd well observes<sup>8</sup> that “they contain the fundamental error committed by Wycliffe and his followers which infected and distorted their whole theology; and it must be carefully borne in mind if we would understand his system.”

You will remember that a portion of the Third Book<sup>9</sup> of Richard Hooker’s *Ecclesiastical Polity*, and also of his Fifth Book,<sup>1</sup> are specially devoted to a refutation of this error, and to an exposure of its dangerous consequences, as seen in the history<sup>2</sup> of the mistake of St. Cyprian and the African Bishops as to the invalidity of Baptism administered by heretics, and as displayed in the time of Athanasius when the Luciferians refused to acknowledge Arian Bishops on their repentance, and in the days of St. Augustine in the schism of the Donatists, imagining themselves to be the only pure Church of Christ; and in the fanaticism of the Anabaptists and others in our own country, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries who forgot our Lord’s Parables in the 13th chapter of St. Matthew concerning the mixed and imperfect condition of His Church while upon earth, which He compares to a field containing tares mingled with wheat, and to a net having in it both good fish and bad;

<sup>8</sup> Notes on that Treatise, p. clviii., and in Wilkins, iii., 248. Qui peccator est aliquâ sorde maculatus non potest de Christi Ecclesiâ appellari.

<sup>9</sup> Hooker, E.P., iii., ch. i.

<sup>1</sup> Hooker, E.P., v., chap. lxviii., 6, and our own 26th Article. “In the Visible Church the evil will be ever mingled with the good, and sometimes the Evil have chief authority in the Ministration of the Word and Sacraments.”

<sup>2</sup> Hooker, iii., ch. i. and v., ch. lxii.

and who, ignoring the truth that it is God only that can read the heart, and that all who profess publicly, and openly acknowledge "one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism," are to be owned by us as members of the visible Church, claimed to be the only Saints, and to be the only true Church of God, and who, on the plea of zeal for Him and for the holiness of His Church, would have exterminated all others as no better than heathens and infidels, and would have seized even on all civil power and pre-eminence as an inheritance which Christ the Lord of all had given to them as the Saints, who alone ought to rule on earth.

When we bear in mind Wiclif's opinions on the Church as a society consisting only of holy persons, and when we remember the corruptions and abuses which he saw in the Church of Rome, then dominant in England, we are not surprised to find that he denounced the Pope as the manifest chief "antichrist"<sup>3</sup> of St. John, and his Cardinals and Bishops as "Children of the Fiend and sons of Belial"; and the Church herself as a "synagogue of Satan."<sup>4</sup>

He little foresaw the consequence of such assertions as these. The acts of the Clergy of such a society in administering the Word and Sacraments, were con-

<sup>3</sup> "Patulus Antichristus," and "abomination of desolation." Wilkins, iii., 30. On his return from his two years' embassy at Bruges, in 1376, Wiclif called the Pope "Antichrist, the proud worldly Priest of Rome, and most cursed of clippers and purse kervers." Lewis, 37.

<sup>4</sup> See Brown, *Fasic.*, p. 292.

sidered by him and his followers<sup>5</sup> as vitiated and nullified by the heresy and wickedness of the minister, and it was a necessary corollary of such propositions that a new Church of Christ must be set up in England by his disciples ; and thus a door was opened to the endless multiplication of religious sects which England saw in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and which overthrew her civil as well as her Ecclesiastical polity ; and which still paralyses her in her warfare against sin and error, and in her endeavours to spread the faith of Christ at home and abroad.

Against such wild and dangerous speculations let us again appeal to the calm wisdom of Richard Hooker,<sup>6</sup> who says, “ They ” (the Romanists) “ ask us where our Church did lurk,—in what cave of the earth it slept for so many hundred years together,—before the birth of Martin Luther ? as if we were of opinion that *Luther* did erect a *new Church of Christ*. No : the Church of Christ which *was from the beginning*, is, and continueth, unto the end ; of which Church all parts have not been always equally sincere and sound.” And as to the Church of Rome, he says, “ We dare not communicate with Rome concerning sundry her gross and grievous abominations ” (which we removed

<sup>5</sup> See Wilkins, *Concilia*, iii., 157. *Episcopus aut Sacerdos in peccato mortali non ordinat nec consecrat nec baptizat.* The benedictions of heretical Bishops are maledictions, iii., 343, cp. p. 342. It is true that in one of his works he says that a cursed man doth fully the sacraments though it be to his own damning (Lewis, p. 118–144), but he also said that “ wicked men’s *prayer* displeaseth God, and harmeth themselves and the people,” *Ibid*, 144. How then could their ministry of Sacraments also with *prayers* be salutary ?

<sup>6</sup> Hooker, iii., ch. i.

at the Reformation, and which she would impose upon us), “yet touching those main parts of Christian truth wherein they constantly still persist, we gladly acknowledge them to be the family of Jesus Christ, and our prayer is that they may so frame and reform themselves that no distraction remain in anything.” And our own Bishop Sanderson, who loved to tread in Hooker’s steps, while he affirms that Rome is “the chief cause of the schisms in Christendom,” by enforcing new and heretical terms of Church Communion,<sup>7</sup> says also, that “the great promoters of the Roman interest among us,<sup>8</sup> and betrayers of the Protestant cause, are they who among other false principles maintain that the Church of Rome is no Church”; because they forget that she still has the Holy Scriptures, and the Three Creeds, and the Sacraments of Christ, and a succession of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons; and thus they afford a triumph to the Romanists who allege that we set up a new Church at the Reformation, and are therefore no Church at all; and they give countenance to those who set up new sects in opposition to the Church of England. What the Church of England did at the Reformation was to clear herself from novel Romish corruptions, and to preserve the ancient Church of Christ which had existed in this country in unbroken continuity, in various degrees of purity, since the times of the Apostles.

So much as to Wiclif’s teaching on the Church. Let us now hear his opinion of *the Christian Ministry*.

<sup>7</sup> Bp. Sanderson, Sermon xi, § 5, and his last will and testament.

<sup>8</sup> Bp. Sanderson, Preface to his Sermons, p. xviii.

“I boldly affirm,”<sup>9</sup> he says, “that in the Primitive Church, in the time of St. Paul, *two orders* of Clergy were sufficient, namely, the order of Priest and Deacon; and that a *Presbyter* and *Bishop were the same*.”

Allowance must be made for such assertions as these. As the next sentence shews, Wiclif was puzzled by the many orders and degrees of Ecclesiastics, which he saw in the Roman Church, and which he there enumerates. “Pope, Cardinals, Patriarchs, Arch-Bishops, Bishops, Archdeacons, Officials, and Deans”; and by one stroke he would have reduced them all to two, on the supposed authority of Holy Scripture, which he regarded as sufficient and supreme in such matters as these.

He forgot that for the right understanding of Scripture the testimony of Church History and the evidence of the practice of the ancient Church are requisite; and that as our own Church expresses it in the Preface to her Ordinal, “It is evident unto all men diligently reading the Holy Scripture and ancient authors that from the Apostles’ time there have been these orders of Ministers in Christ’s Church, Bishops, Priests, and Deacons.”

Wiclif was a Predestinarian<sup>1</sup> in religion, and a

<sup>9</sup> Wiclif, *Trial.*, iv., 15; cp. Wilkins, iii., 344.

<sup>1</sup> See *Trial.*, ii., 14, Deus necessitat creaturas singulas activas ad quemlibet actum suum; sic sunt aliqui prædestinati ad gloriam, aliqui ad poenam perpetuam ordinati, and iii. c. 7, Gratia non potest excidere, and see iii., 102, Omnia eveniunt necessitate absoluta. Cp. Joseph Milner’s *Church Hist. on Wiclif*, chap. iii., cent. xiv., p. 607, ed., Edin. 1842. “The Church is an assembly of predestinated persons.”

Presbyterian in Church government,<sup>2</sup> and his opinions in both respects bore fruit afterwards at Geneva and in Scotland, and if he and his followers had been allowed to have had free play in England, the Reformation in this Country would have resembled the Reformation that afterwards took place at Geneva under John Calvin, and the Reformation that was effected in Scotland under John Knox.

Providentially this misfortune was averted ; after a long struggle of nearly three centuries, the Church of England not only cleared herself by God's good providence, from the grievous errors and corruptions of Rome, but was also preserved from those reckless religious innovations which caused so much havock in Switzerland and Scotland, and spread so much mischief in other lands.

Here again we may refer to Richard Hooker. He had been educated under Puritan influence ; and his early tendencies were toward Presbyterianism. He candidly owns that the doctrine which had been propounded by Wiclif and adopted by Calvin and Knox, that the Christian Ministry<sup>3</sup> consists only of two orders, Presbyters and Deacons, and that in Scripture Bishops and Presbyters are identical,—had formerly seemed probable to himself ; but after a careful investigation of the subject, illustrated by the light of Scripture and of Church History, (as

<sup>2</sup> *Trial.*, iv., 15, cp. Vaughan's *Life of Wiclif*, i., 392, 398 ; ii., 274.

<sup>3</sup> See Hooker, vii., xi., 8, where he calls it a doctrine "which he himself had once judged a great deal more probable" than he afterwards did.



displayed in his Seventh Book<sup>4</sup> where the subject is examined) he deliberately states his conviction as follows<sup>5</sup>; “let us not fear to be herein bold and peremptory, that if anything in the Church’s government, surely the first institution of Bishops” (as a distinct order from Presbyters) “was from heaven, was even of God. The Holy Ghost was the Author of it.”

As to the *Christian Sacraments*, Wiclif affirmed the necessity of Baptism,<sup>6</sup> and that sin original and actual was washed away by it, and he approved the appointment of Sponsors in Infant Baptism, and acknowledged, in case of necessity, the validity of Lay Baptism. He does not determine the question whether Children can be saved without Baptism; but inclines to think that they can, since “God is more inclined to reward men than to condemn.”

With regard to *Confirmation* it need not surprise us that Wiclif was not prepossessed in its favour. The Church of Rome did not practice the laying on of hands (which in Holy Scripture<sup>7</sup> was the outward sign of the inward gift); and the use of oil and other ceremonies in administering it, not being found in Scripture, created in Wiclif’s mind a prejudice against it; and it was administered in a light and perfunctory manner. It has been recorded as a proof of the

<sup>4</sup> Hooker viii., ch. i., ch. xi.—ch. xiii.

<sup>5</sup> Hooker, vii., ch. vi.

<sup>6</sup> Wiclif, *Trialog.*, iv., 11, 12, 13; cp. Lewis, p. 165, 166.

<sup>7</sup> Acts viii. 17, 19; xix. 6; Hebrews vi. 1. Wiclif, *Trialog.*, iv., 14.

reverence with which Confirmation was regarded by the great Bishop of Lincoln, St. Hugh, in the twelfth century, that he was distinguished from his contemporary Bishops by never administering it on horseback;

Tanta ministerii reverentia pontificalis,  
Ut nullum confirmet *eques*.<sup>8</sup>

No wonder that the “*levis et brevis*<sup>9</sup> *confirmatio*” as Wiclif calls it, found little favour in his eyes: and the vicious lives, and heretical tenets of many of the Bishops who administered it, seemed to him to impair its validity.

Here also we may be content to appeal to Richard Hooker who has supplied a sufficient answer to all objections to Confirmation, and a clear and conclusive statement of the Apostolic origin and spiritual benefit of Confirmation, as a special function of the Episcopal Office, in his fifth book.<sup>1</sup>

With respect to the *Holy Eucharist of the Body and Blood of Christ*, Wiclif was the first who lifted up his voice with boldness and power against the Roman dogma of Transubstantiation.<sup>2</sup>

No doubt Bertram or Ratram, the celebrated Monk of Corbey, in the ninth century (to whom Bishop Ridley owed so much),<sup>3</sup> had protested against the doctrine of

<sup>8</sup> *Metrica Vita St<sup>i</sup>. Hugonis*, v. 769.

<sup>9</sup> *Trial.*, iv., 14.

<sup>1</sup> Hooker, v., ch. lxvi.

<sup>2</sup> For his teaching on the Holy Eucharist see *Trialogus*, iv., ch. 2-10.

<sup>3</sup> See the words of Ridley, quoted in Dr. Gloucester Ridley's *Life of Ridley*, Lond., 1763, pp. 164-168; cp. 618, 619, 664, 681, where a real spiritual presence is emphatically declared by Ridley to be the doctrine of the Holy Scripture and of the Catholic Fathers of the Church. See also Neander, *Church History*, vi., 302-304.

Transubstantiation ; and Berengarius in the eleventh, who profited by Ratram's labours, did the same ; to whom Wiclif often refers. But Wiclif denounced it with all his might as an antichristian heresy,<sup>4</sup> and as a dangerous and deadly<sup>5</sup> invention of the Evil One.

He was scarcely less tolerant of the dogma of Consubstantiation,<sup>6</sup> and for this and other reasons Wiclif's memory has been treated with great asperity by Luther<sup>7</sup> and Melanchthon. So far his opinion, on the negative side, is clear ; but what his positive teaching on the subject was is not so evident. Sometimes he seems to incline to what was afterwards called Zwinglianism, as when he says that the words of our Lord "This is My Body," "This is My Blood," may be illustrated by His language concerning John the Baptist.<sup>8</sup> "This is Elias," and are spoken only figuratively, and sacramentally, but he affirms that our Lord's Body which is in heaven is actually present in the consecrated elements, and he says that it is

<sup>4</sup> See Neander, *Church History*, vi., 313.

<sup>5</sup> He says, *Trial.*, iv., 6, that there cannot be a more impious heresy than that which asserts that in the Holy Eucharist there is "accidens sine subjecto," *i.e.*, the colour and taste of bread without the substance of bread.

<sup>6</sup> *Trial.*, iv., 8.

<sup>7</sup> Luther calls him the "Spitzigen Wickliffe," and Melanchthon says, "plane furebat." See the passages in Gieseler's *Church History*, Div. iv., ch. viii., and see the citations in Wirth's edition of the *Triologus*, p. 30, 31, 32, note ; and in Vaughan's *Wiclif*, 324, 340.

<sup>8</sup> *Trial.*, iv., 7. He quotes also Genesis xli. 26, "the seven kine and the seven ears are (*i.e.*, represent) seven years."

there “habitudinaliter,”<sup>9</sup> a word derived from the Schools; and he says that when he sees the host he adores it “conditionaliter,” and that he devoutly and entirely adores the Body of Christ which is in heaven.

Wiclif did a great work in defending the Church of England from the heresy of Transubstantiation, and in emboldening our forefathers in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to give their bodies to be burned rather than accept that heresy as a term of Church Communion. But we must look to later Divines, especially to Bishop Ridley, and to Richard Hooker,<sup>1</sup> for a declaration of the true scriptural and Catholic doctrine of a real spiritual presence of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Holy Communion, and of the inestimable blessings communicated thereby both to the soul and body, namely, the washing away of sins by His most precious Blood, and the pledge of a glorious Resurrection and a blessed Immortality to the body and soul by virtue of the indwelling and operation of Him Who is Very God and Very Man, and Who is the Resurrection and the Life, and Who communicates Himself both as God and Man, to every penitent, faithful and loving receiver in that Holy Sacrament.

### Wiclif's opinions on *Marriage*<sup>2</sup> and *Celibacy*

<sup>9</sup> Hoc Sacramentum est Corpus Christi in formâ panis. *Trial.*, iv., 2, quodammodo bene, pulchré, realiter, iv., 3; iv., 7; iv., 8; iv., 9; iv., 10, habitudinaliter, cp. Wilkins, iii., 342, and Wiclif's words in Lewis, p. 103, where he denounces as heretics those who deny the Sacrament to be God's Body. '

<sup>1</sup> Hooker, v., ch. lv., 8, 9; and v., ch. lxx., 11.      <sup>2</sup> See *Trial.*, iv., 19.

deserve to be noticed. He regarded<sup>3</sup> celibacy as the preferable state where it could be received; but he was opposed to the imposition of vows of celibacy on the Clergy or others; and the consequences of this enforced celibacy on men and women are displayed in strong language by him and his followers.<sup>4</sup> He thought that Marriage without expectation of offspring was sinful, and he did not realize the force of the eighteenth chapter of Leviticus, which the Church of England, with the rest of the Church Catholic, regards as a Divine Code, obligatory on all nations, and as prohibiting Marriage within certain degrees of kindred and affinity. Indeed the arbitrary multiplication of prohibitions of Marriage by the Church of Rome extending them to what she called "spiritual affinity," seems to have inclined Wiclif to reject all prohibitions entirely.<sup>5</sup> This is a characteristic specimen of the impatient waywardness of his mind.

With regard to a future state, he clung to belief in Purgatory,<sup>6</sup> but he thought that the poor no less than the rich had a claim to share in the treasure of the merits of the Church, and therefore did not believe that the rich could do any good by bequeathing money for masses after their death. He believed in the eternity of future rewards and punishments.<sup>7</sup> He rejected the doctrine of the Mediatorship of Saints, and declared that Christ is the only Mediator.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> See his words in Lewis, p. 164.

<sup>4</sup> See his words in Lewis, 163, and cp. Wilkins, viii., 363, 367, Lewis, 337.

<sup>5</sup> See *Trialog.*, iv., 20.

<sup>6</sup> See Wilkins, p. 347.

<sup>7</sup> *Trial.*, iv., 39-44.

<sup>8</sup> *Trial.*, iii., 20.

Before I conclude, let me refer to some of his opinions, which are of special interest at the present time.

He was an advocate for the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church, as it was then.<sup>9</sup> Considering his peculiar temperament, and looking at the enormous wealth of the Bishops and Clergy, especially of the Monastic Orders at that time, and at the unscrupulous means which they used to amass and augment it, and at the pompous ostentation and luxurious self-indulgence in which they expended it, we can hardly be surprized that Wiclif should have been ready to aid in despoiling them of that which was so ill-gotten and so grossly abused. But here also he was betrayed by an excess of reaction into the contrary extreme. He went so far as to say that not merely ought the Temporal Rulers to take away endowments from a delinquent Church, but that they ought to be condemned if they did not,<sup>1</sup> and that, Civil Powers ought to be punished if they endowed the Church.<sup>2</sup>

He often refers to the legend, then commonly believed, that the Church of Rome had been endowed in the person of Pope Sylvester, by the Emperor Constantine, and that a voice was then heard from

<sup>9</sup> Cp. Vaughan's *Wiclif*, ii., 250-254, 257, 266.

<sup>1</sup> Wiclif, *Trial.*, iv., 15. Debent auferre temporalia sub poenâ damnationis ; Sæculares propter dotationem Ecclesiae sunt puniendi ; tene firmiter et nullatenus dubites, quin temporales domini in isto graviter peccaverunt. Wilkins, iii., 340, 341.

<sup>2</sup> Wiclif, *Trial.*, iv., 18. Cp. Vaughan's *Wiclif*, i., 319 ; ii. 230-242.

heaven, "To-day has poison been poured into the Church." He was of opinion that there could be no such thing as Evangelical purity without Apostolic poverty.

He thought that tithes were a remnant of Judaism,<sup>3</sup> and ought to be abolished, and could only be accepted as "pure alms," and might be withheld by the tithe-payer from an ungodly Clergyman,<sup>4</sup> and that Christian Pastors ought to imitate<sup>5</sup> Christ Who had not where to lay His head. He utterly disliked that Clergymen should hold any Civil Magistracy,<sup>6</sup> or be Justices of the Peace.

The results of such teaching as this were seen in the sixteenth century, when the Monasteries were dissolved, and tithes and revenues were given by Parliament to Henry VIII., who enriched his favourites with the spoils of the Church.

Wiclif, who had invoked the aid of the Temporal Power to despoil the Church, would probably have changed his mind when he had seen the Abbey lands transferred to courtiers and nobles, and an annual sum of more than £100,000<sup>7</sup> diverted from Parochial uses to the enrichment of secular houses,<sup>8</sup> and about 260 Lay Persons becoming Impropriators of Tithes, so that it was calculated in the year 1833<sup>1</sup> that out of 10,540

<sup>3</sup> Cp. Vaughan's *Wiclif*, ii., 250-254.

<sup>4</sup> Wilkins, *Concilia*, iii., 157.

<sup>5</sup> Wilkins, iii., 347.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 347. Vaughan's *Wiclif*, ii., 258.

<sup>7</sup> Hooker, vii., ch. xxiv., calculated it at £126,000 per annum.

<sup>8</sup> Basire on Sacrilege, p. 118. Ed. Lond., 1668.

<sup>1</sup> Tables of Tithe Commissioners, 1833.

Benefices in England and Wales 2,552, with an annual value of £731,535, were in Lay hands.

On this question also let me refer again to Richard Hooker who deals with it fully in his seventh book, where he mentions this opinion of Wiclif, and calls it “a palpable error,”<sup>2</sup> and speaks of “the sacrilegious intention of Church robbers which lurked under the plausible name of Reformation.” “The goods of the Church,” he says, “belong not to man<sup>3</sup> but to God ; the Clergy are God’s receivers, and to rob them is to rob God, as the prophet declares (Mal. iii. 8) ; and it is the duty of all men to consecrate their substance to Him ; and for the sin of sacrilege God’s judgment will surely overtake those men and nations who commit it.”

Our own experience in England and in Ireland may serve to confirm the truth of these words of Richard Hooker, who asserts that in such cases as these wherein the example of Christ’s poverty was profanely alleged,<sup>4</sup> it was the plea of Julian the Apostate, when he wanted to rob the Church. We must all, he says, whether Clergy or Laity, follow Christ in all that is good and holy, especially in meekness, poverty of spirit, and in love, but he adds<sup>5</sup> we are not to follow Him, “as

<sup>2</sup> Hooker, vii., ch. xxii., and Mr. Keble’s note. Melanchthon (quoted above), says that Wiclif’s doctrine was “madness.” Plane *furebat* Wiclefus.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vii., ch. xxi., xxii. He quotes Proverbs iii. 9 ; Malachi i. 8, iii. 10 ; cp. vii., ch. xxiv.

<sup>4</sup> Hooker, vii., ch. xxiii.

<sup>5</sup> Hooker makes a distinction between Monastic Property—especially such as was applied to superstitious uses—and Ecclesiastical Property devoted to the true worship of God and the salvation of souls. The tenure and appli-



thieves follow true men, to take their goods by violence from them. God, he says, is righteous in taking away that which men abuse, but does that (he asks), excuse the violence of thieves and robbers ? ”

A practical moral may hence be derived by us, my reverend Brethren.

If the Clergy are—(as Hooker calls them)—God’s receivers, and if they who rob the Clergy rob God ; let us remember also that we are God’s stewards and dispensers, and are bound to employ our endowments as far as we are able for the promotion of His glory, and for the good of the souls committed to our charge. And if we act in the full consciousness of this obligation, then, even though men should wrong us by despoiling us of earthly possessions, which are God’s, we shall have good reason to hope that we shall receive from God other endowments far more precious than lands and houses, even an everlasting inheritance in His kingdom of heaven.

I have trespassed long on your indulgence, in compliance with the request of the Archbishop of this Province, to whom this Diocese owes a debt of gratitude for services rendered during his connexion, as Chancellor, with the Cathedral Church of Lincoln from 1869 to 1877 ; and I have also ventured to do so because, in the words of a learned writer<sup>8</sup> the

cation of the former may be modified ; but neither the one nor the other ought to be secularized. He does not excuse the abuse of the goods of the Church, but if abuse of property is to be pleaded as a reason for spoliation, no property would be safe, vii., ch. xxiv., 24. Cp. Mr. Keble’s *Preface to Hooker*, p. xcv.

<sup>8</sup> Dr. J. H. Todd in his edition of Wiclif’s three Treatises, Dublin, 1851.

consideration of this subject, while it proves the urgent need there was of a religious Reformation in England in the age of Wiclif, cannot fail to render us thankful to Almighty God that our Reformation was not conducted on some of the principles I have specified, which were advocated in Wiclif's writings ; but that it pleased Him to raise up other men after him, who emulated his zeal, and profited by his labours, especially by the unspeakable benefit which he was the first to confer on England, the inspired Word of God in our mother tongue ; and who were enlightened by divine grace, and made wise by the teaching of events, and who have bequeathed to us the precious inheritance of a Church, not indeed according to Wiclif's ideal, which never has been, and never will be realized in this world, exempt from all earthly taint and imperfection,—but a Church grounded on the sure foundation of Holy Scripture, and professing the true faith, as expounded by the ancient Church Universal in her Creeds, and dispensing the Holy Sacraments by the ministry of the three orders of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, deriving their commission by a continuous and uninterrupted succession through eighteen centuries from the holy Apostles, and from the Hand of Christ Himself ; and which has been watered by the blood of Martyrs, dying in defence of truths proclaimed by Wiclif to the world, and which has diffused the pure light of the Gospel by Christian Missions and Apostolic Churches founded in all parts of the globe ; and which we may humbly believe the

beatified spirit of John Wiclif, now purified from the dross of human passion and infirmity, would rejoice to recognize as a resemblance of the primitive Church in doctrine, government, and worship, and which is enabled by God's grace to train her children upon earth for the everlasting peace and felicity of the Church glorified in heaven.

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